



For Immediate Release
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Statement on Passing of Former New Mexico Supreme Court Justice Daniel Sosa

The New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association mourns the loss of former New Mexico Supreme Court Chief Justice Daniel Sosa, Jr. who passed away on September 4th at the age of 92 at his home in Las Cruces. A trailblazer for Hispanic attorneys in every sense of the word, Justice Sosa left a remarkable legacy in New Mexico and in the legal community.

Some of the “firsts” that Justice Sosa achieved were being one of the first Hispanics to attend and graduate from the University of New Mexico School of Law and becoming the first Hispanic to serve as district attorney for Dona Ana, Otero and Lincoln counties—a judicial district that was made up of predominantly white voters at the time. In 1975, he became one of the first Hispanic justices on the New Mexico Supreme Court where he served for sixteen years. During that time, he served as a mentor to his law clerks many of whom went on to become today’s prominent Hispanic judges in New Mexico.

Justice Sosa was hugely influential in the establishment of key legal organizations dedicated to the advancement of Hispanics and Hispanic attorneys. He and nine other attorneys created the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF). Through MALDEF, Justice Sosa took on important civil rights cases in New Mexico that resulted in meaningful changes in education and in the work place. As Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, he played a significant role in the creation of the New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association (NMHBA). Today, the NMHBA is the largest voluntary bar association in New Mexico and is dedicated to promoting the education and development of Hispanic legal professionals.

The NMHBA owes Justice Sosa a debt of gratitude for giving Hispanic attorneys what he did not have when he began his career—that is, a role model who set the example for Hispanics to believe they can succeed in areas where they never had before. The NMHBA honors his memory by continuing to fight for equality and increasing opportunities for Hispanics and Hispanic attorneys in New Mexico.

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